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ABSTRACT

Summarized are four studies which compared the ability of learning disabled (LD) and normal students to learn the meanings of homonyms (words that sound alike but have different meanings) when presented in various modes. Homonyms were presented in either random order or in contiguous pairs, with the illustrative sentences presented after the word when in random order or after the pair, and in the presence of context cues or without context cues. Results indicated that normal students learned at a higher rate than LD students, that LD students needed to be provided with a pattern for organizing information, that context cues were a determiner of effective learning for both normals and LD pupils, that context served as immediate reinforcement for both groups of pupils, and that paired homonyms were learned more readily than homonyms presented in random sequence. (Author/DB)

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Prototypes for Teaching Word Meaning Skills - Homonyms - to Learning Disabled Children[1]

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Prototypes for Teaching Word Meaning Skills -
Homonyms - to Learning Disabled Children

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This presentation consists of a summary of four studies to determine the effects of various modes of presentation and feedback relating to the learning of homonyms by Learning Disabled and normal students. The focus of these studies were homonyms: words that sound alike, but have different meanings. Data were sought relative to the following questions:

1. Will the rate of learning differ if homonyms are presented in contiguous pairs versus presentation via a random order?
2. Will the rate of learning differ if homonyms are presented via a random list, each illustrated by a sentence using the new word versus the homonyms presented in contiguous pairs followed by an illustrative sentence?
3. Will the rate of learning differ if pairs of homonyms are presented in the absence of context versus homonyms presented and illustrated by a sentence containing the new word?
4. If pupils are presented new words to learn in a random list, will context aid the rate of learning?

Sample

Dr. Allen has presented the research design, data collection procedures, and the method of analysis for each of these studies. Dr. Jones has described the subject selection criteria and characteristics. A summary of the ANOVA results are presented in Table 1.

Instruments

The instruments utilized in the following studies generally consisted of paper and pencil instruments of word lists of homonyms. The instruments varied in terms of presentation of random versus contiguous homonyms, and with or without context cues.

Results

The following are the results of the studies:

1. Homonyms presented in contiguous pairs versus presentation by a random order.

The results of the analysis of variance indicated there were significant main effects between groups ($p.<.05$), with normals learning at a higher rate than Learning Disabled pupils. Neither treatment was significantly more effective for either group, and there was no significant Groups X Treatments interaction. Over the four trials, there were significant differences ($p.<.001$), with both groups improving and attaining their highest score on trial four.

2. Homonyms presented via random list, each illustrated by a sentence using the new word, versus homonyms presented in contiguous pairs followed by an illustrative sentence.

Again, there was a significant difference between groups ($p.<.001$), with normal pupils scoring higher than Learning Disabled pupils. However, no significant differences were found between treatments, or in the Groups X Treatments interaction. Both groups made significant progress across trials. The significant Groups X Trials effect showed greater increase for the N Ss between trials 1 and 2 while for the LD Ss, the greater increase occurred between trials 2 and 3.

3. Presentation of random pairs of homonyms in the absence of context versus random pairs of homonyms illustrated by sentences containing the new word.

Analysis of variance again indicated there was a significant group's main effect ($p.<.05$) in favor of the normal pupils and a significant treatments effect ($p.<.01$), indicating homonyms presented within context is superior to pairs of homonyms presented in the absence of context. The significant Groups X Trials interaction is important. The rate of learning

being more rapid for the N Ss under the context treatment than for the LD Ss.

4. Presentation of new words in a contiguous list combined with context cues; i.e., sentences containing the homonyms.

Analysis of variance indicated differences between groups ($p.<.001$) of normals and Learning Disabled pupils in favor of the normal group. Similarly, there was a significant difference in treatments ($p.<.05$), with the presence of context producing sigiificant differences in treatments ($p.<.05$), with the presence of context producing significantly higher scores for both groups. Both groups made significant progress across trials. None of the interactions was significant.

Discussion

Analysis of the four studies presented above leads to the following conclusions:

1. Normal students learn word meanings - homonyms - at a higher rate than Learning Disabled students.

2. There is a need for Learning Disabled pupils to be provided with a pattern to follow or some system of organizing the information they are expected to process or learn. In the absence of context homonyms can be learned, but less readily and easily, regardless of their presentation in contiguous pairs or in a random list.

3. The use of context is a determiner to effective learning of new words for both normals and Learning Disabled pupils.

4. The immediate reinforcement value in the utilization of context, as opposed to simple repetition, is more effective and enhances better performance in both Learning Disabled and normal pupils.

5. In addition to the utilization of context cues, homonyms presented in contiguous fashion are easier to learn than when they are presented in a random sequence.

TABLE 1

SUMMARY OF ANOVA RESULTS FOR FOUR STUDIES IN TEACHING WORD MEANINGS - HOMONYMS - TO LEARNING DISABLED CHILDREN

Investigator	Variable	G	T	GxT	Tl	GxTl	TxTl	GxTxTl
Hosford	Random vs Contiquous lists-No Context	S	NS	NS	S	NS	NS	NS
Hosford	Random & Contiquous lists-Context	S	NS	NS	S	S	NS	NS
Hosford	Random lists-Context vs No Context	S	S	S	S	S	NS	NS
Hosford	Contiquous lists-Context vs No Context	S	S	NS	S	NS	NS	NS